

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session
Climate Change: The Threat Too Big to Talk About
Cedars Unitarian Universalist Church, Bainbridge Island WA, By Fran Korten
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Personal Check-ins (we do these over lunch)

Chalice or Candle Lighting or Sound A Chime

Opening Words

This we know.

The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth.

This we know.

All things are connected like the blood which unites one family.

All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.

We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it.

Whatever we do to the web, we do ourselves.

—Attributed to Chief Seattle

Topic: Climate Change: The Threat Too Big to Talk About

It seems that very few personal conversations touch on climate change, even though it is likely the biggest threat humanity has ever faced. It seems to be addressed mainly in formal settings devoted to the topic. There is presently only one small group session plan* on the UU Small Group Ministry Network or the UUA websites that addresses climate change. Why might this be? Is it because it is a threat too big (too frightening, too overwhelming) to talk about?

Listen carefully to the news headlines and opening paragraphs of three recent news reports about climate change. Be aware of your personal reactions in your body, in your thoughts, in your emotions.

Major Climate Report Describes a Strong Risk of Crisis as Early as 2040

Incheon, South Korea. A Landmark report from the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change paints a far more dire picture of the immediate consequences of climate change than previously thought and says that avoiding the damage requires transforming the world economy at a speed and scale that has "no documented historic precedent."

—New York Times, Oct. 7, 2018, page 1

- Emissions Surge, Hastening Perils Across the Globe;
2 New Warming Studies;
Rising Greenhouse Gases Likened to "Speeding Freight Train"
Greenhouse gas emissions worldwide are growing at an accelerating pace this year, researchers said Wednesday, putting the world on track to face some of the most severe consequences of global warming sooner than expected.
—New York Times, Dec. 6, 2018, page 1

- Ocean Temperatures Rising Faster, as are Fears
A Catastrophic Impact on Marine Life, Coral Reefs and Weather
Scientists say the world's oceans are warming far more quickly than previously thought, a finding with dire implications for climate change because almost all the excess heat absorbed by the planet ends up stored in their waters.
—New York Times, Jan. 11, 2019, page 1

Questions

How did you feel as you listened to those news story headlines and opening paragraphs?

If you saw those headlines in a newspaper, would you read the story? Why or why not?

What threat do you feel climate change represents to your own future, your children's, grandchildren's or other relatives' future?

Do you talk about climate change with personal friends? Children? Grandchildren? Why or why not? What ways have you found to share your concerns?

How do you feel about the way we are handling the topic of climate change in our church?

Where do you find hope regarding climate change?

Closing Words

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

—Closing words of the Earth Charter

*See "Hotel Earth and Threat of Global Warning" (including the UUA Study/Action, 2004-2006) <http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.html> and scroll down to the title.